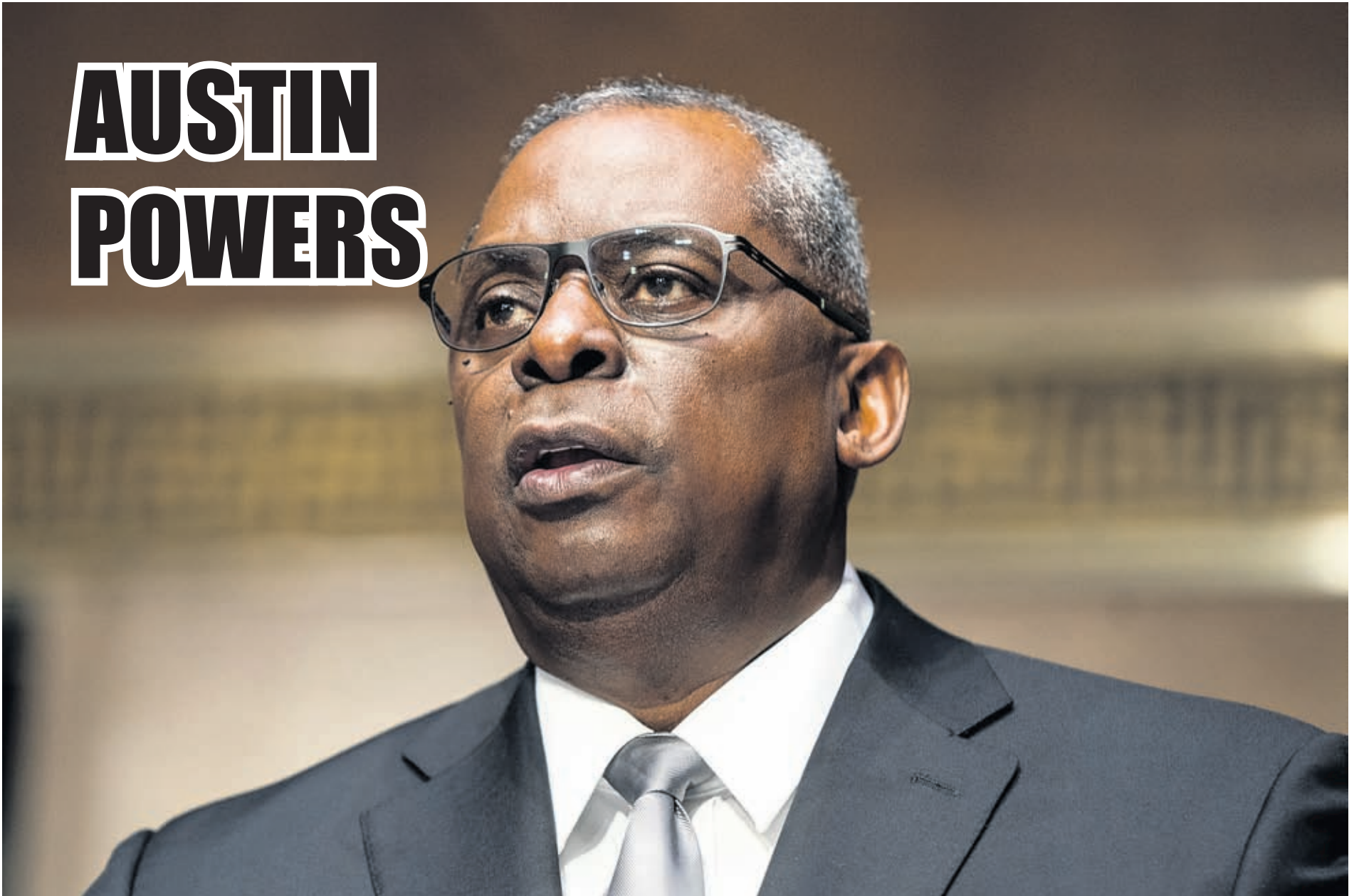


AUSTIN POWERS



Secretary of Defense nominee Lloyd Austin, a recently retired Army general, speaks during his conformation hearing before the Senate Armed Services Committee on Capitol Hill, Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021, in Washington.

Associated Press

Austin wins Senate confirmation as 1st Black Pentagon chief

By **ROBERT BURNS and ANDREW TAYLOR**
Associated Press
WASHINGTON (AP) — Lloyd J. Austin, a West Point graduate who rose to the Army's elite ranks and marched through racial barriers in a 41-year career, won Sen-

ate confirmation Friday to become the nation's first Black secretary of defense. The 93-2 vote gave President Joe Biden his second Cabinet member; Avril Haines was confirmed on Wednesday as the first woman to serve as direc-

tor of national intelligence. Biden is expected to win approval for others on his national security team in coming days, including Antony Blinken as secretary of state. Biden is looking for Austin to restore stability atop the Pentagon, which

went through two Senate-confirmed secretaries of defense and four who held the post on an interim basis during the Trump administration. The only senators who voted against Austin were Republicans Mike Lee of Utah and Josh Hawley of

Missouri. Before heading to the Pentagon, Austin wrote on Twitter that he is especially proud to be the first Black secretary of defense. "Let's get to work," he wrote.

Continued on Page 2



 <p>Potatoes Russet 8lb</p>	 <p>Chicken Cutlet Provencaal</p>	 <p>EE Corn on The Cob</p>	 <p>Pringles Wavy Classic Salted Crisp 4.8oz</p>
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*Offer is valid from 22 - 28 January 2021 and while supplies last. All prices are in US dollars (\$)



Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, right, greets Deputy Secretary of Defense David Norquist as he arrives at the Pentagon, Friday, Jan. 22, 2021, in Washington.
Associated Press

Continued from Front

And a short time later he arrived at the Pentagon's River Entrance, where he was greeted by holdover Deputy Defense Secretary David Norquist, who has been the acting secretary since Wednesday, and Army Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He didn't stop to answer reporters' questions but said he looks forward to dealing with the press. The Pentagon said that after be-

ing sworn in and getting an intelligence briefing, Austin would hold a meeting on COVID-19 with senior civilian and military officials. He also planned to speak by phone with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and to receive briefings about China and the Middle East.

Austin's confirmation was complicated by his status as a recently retired general. He required a waiver of a legal prohibition on a military

officer serving as secretary of defense within seven years of retirement. Austin retired in 2016 after serving as the first Black general to head U.S. Central Command. He was the first Black vice chief of staff of the Army in 2012 and also served as director of the Joint Staff, a behind-the-scenes job that gave him an intimate view of the Pentagon's inner workings. The House and the Senate approved the waiver Thursday, clearing the way for the Senate confirmation vote.

Austin, a large man with a booming voice and a tendency to shy from publicity, describes himself as the son of a postal worker and a homemaker from Thomasville, Georgia. He has promised to speak his mind to Congress and to Biden. At his confirmation hearing Tuesday, Austin said he had not sought the nomination but was ready to lead the Pentagon without clinging to his military status and with full awareness that being a political appointee and Cabinet member requires "a different perspective and unique duties from a career in uniform."

As vice president, Biden worked closely with Austin in 2010-11 to wind down U.S. military involvement in Iraq while Austin was the top U.S. commander in Baghdad.

American forces withdrew entirely, only to return in 2014 after the Islamic State extremist group captured large swaths of Iraqi territory. At Central Command, Austin was a key architect of the strategy to defeat IS in Iraq and Syria.

Biden said in December when he announced Austin as his nominee that he considered him "the person we need at this moment," and that he trusts Austin to ensure civilian control of the military.

Critics of the nomination have questioned the wisdom of making an exception to the law against a recently retired military officer serving as defense secretary, noting that the prohibition was put in place to guard against undue military influence in national security matters. Austin has promised to surround himself with qualified civilians. And he made clear at his confirmation hearing that he embraces Biden's early focus on combatting the coronavirus pandemic. "I will quickly review the department's contributions to coronavirus relief efforts, ensuring we are doing everything we can — and then some — to help distribute vaccines across the country and to vaccinate our troops and preserve readiness," he told the Senate Armed Services Committee. □



Gilberto Francois (Betico) Croes
January 25th, 1938 – November 26th, 1986

To our reader and clients;

To our reader and clients;
In connection with the holiday, Betico Croes Day, Aruba Today will not be published on Monday, January 25th, 2021. We will resume our publication on Tuesday, January 26th, 2021.

GOP lawmaker with gun sets off House chamber metal detector



Rep. Andy Harris, R-Md., speaks during a news conference with members of the conservative Freedom Caucus, on Capitol Hill, Thursday, Dec. 3, 2020, in Washington.
Associated Press

By MATTHEW DALY
WASHINGTON (AP) — Capitol Police are investigating an incident in which a Republican lawmaker was blocked from entering the House chamber after setting off a metal detector while apparently carrying a concealed gun.

Rep. Andy Harris, R-Md., set off the metal detector while trying to enter the chamber Thursday after-

noon. The metal detectors were installed after the Jan. 6 insurrection at the Capitol, which left five people dead, including a Capitol police officer. The incident was witnessed by a reporter from the HuffPost website.

After setting off the machine, Harris was asked to step aside for further screening. At that time, an officer discovered Harris

was carrying a concealed gun on his side, according to the reporter.

The officer sent Harris away, at which point Harris tried to get Rep. John Katko, R-N.Y., to take the gun from him. Katko refused, telling Harris he didn't have a license to carry a gun. Harris eventually left and returned less than 10 minutes later. He once again went through security and did not set off the magnetometer. He was then allowed to enter the House floor.

Harris, in his sixth term representing Maryland's Eastern Shore, issued a statement through his chief of staff, Bryan Shuy.

"Because his and his family's lives have been threatened by someone who has been released awaiting trial, for security reasons, the congressman never confirms whether he nor anyone else he's with are carrying a firearm for self-defense," the statement said. □

Biden halts border wall building after Trump's final surge

By ELLIOT SPAGAT

SAN DIEGO (AP) — In the days before Joe Biden became president, construction crews worked quickly to finish Donald Trump's wall at an iconic cross-border park overlooking the Pacific Ocean, which then-first lady Pat Nixon inaugurated in 1971 as a symbol of international friendship.

Biden on Wednesday ordered a "pause" on all wall construction within a week, one of 17 executive orders issued on his first day in office, including six dealing with immigration.

The order leaves billions of dollars of work unfinished — but still under contract — after Trump worked feverishly last year to build more than 450 miles (720 kilometers), a goal he said he achieved eight days before leaving office.

As of Jan. 15, the government spent \$6.1 billion of the \$10.8 billion in work it signed contracts to have done, according to a Senate Democratic aide with knowledge of the contracts who spoke on condition of anonymity because details have not been made public. The full amount under contract would have extended Trump's wall to 664 miles (1,069 kilometers).

Biden, seeking to fulfill a pledge not to build "another foot," gave his administration two months to determine how much it would cost to cancel contracts and whether money could be spent elsewhere. The Senate aide said fees would be negotiated with contractors and the administration would seek to spend whatever's left on related uses on the border, such as roads, lights, sensors and other technology. Publicly, the Trump administration said it secured \$15 billion for the wall. The Senate aide said it was actually \$16.45 billion as of Wednesday, \$5.8 billion of which was appropriated by Congress and the rest diverted from the Defense and Treasury departments. The Trump administration notified the Senate aide on Jan. 14 that it was moving ahead with a contract for



A man looks through the first wall at Friendship Park, near where the border separating Tijuana, Mexico, and San Diego meets the Pacific Ocean Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021, in Tijuana, Mexico.

Associated Press

\$863 million, but it was not awarded.

The Army Corps of Engineers, which has awarded wall contracts with Defense Department money, said Thursday that it told crews not to install any additional barriers and to limit activity over the next few days to what is "necessary to safely prepare each site for a suspension of work."

John Kurc, an activist who posts videos of dynamite blasts by wall construction crews, said he saw one dynamite charge being set Wednesday afternoon in Guadalupe Canyon in easternmost Arizona, even as the inauguration was playing out in Washington. Heavy machines have been crawling over roadways gouged into rocky mountainsides, tapping open holes for posts on U.S. Bureau of Land Management property.

Advocates in Texas' Rio Grande Valley, the busiest area for illegal crossings, and near Nogales, Arizona, saw idle construction equipment Thursday.

But in San Diego, crews were out replacing a steel

fence with imposing, tightly spaced poles topped with flat steel plates rising 30 feet (9 meters), said Dan Watman of Friends of Friendship Park, a group that promotes public access to the cross-border park overlooking the Pacific Ocean.

Contractors began last week, said Watman, who was informed of the project in a December conference call with Border Patrol agents but got no explanation for it. The agency referred questions to the White House, which had no immediate comment.

Trump said the border wall would be "virtually impenetrable" and paid for by Mexico, which never happened. While the wall is much more formidable than the barriers it replaced, it isn't uncommon for smugglers to guide

people over or through it. Portions can be sawed with power tools sold at home improvement stores.

Despite Trump's bravado, Border Patrol officials have said the wall was never meant to stop everyone but rather to slow their advance.

Jose Edgar Zuleta, whose business selling religious jewelry in the Mexican city of Puebla dried up during the coronavirus pandemic, cleared two walls in Friendship Park in October with a special ladder. He moved through brush in a heavily patrolled area for about half an hour before getting caught. His 21-year-old son, who went ahead of him, got picked up hours later.

The cross-border park has hosted yoga classes, concerts and countless news conferences, including one

in 2018 with then-Attorney General Jeff Sessions to announce a "zero tolerance" policy that caused thousands of children to be separated from their parents at the border.

An old bullfighting ring and ocean-view restaurants surround the Mexican side; wetland scrub stretches into the United States.

Years ago, people passed baked goods, kissed and shook hands through a chain-link fence. Watman remembers passing tools back and forth in 2007 to plant a cross-border garden that still stands.

Since 2012, after construction of a double wall at the park, the Border Patrol has opened a gate many weekends for up to 10 people at a time to exchange words with those in Mexico. SLSCO Ltd. of Galveston, Texas, won contracts to build double walls blanketing 14 miles (22 kilometers) in San Diego. Company spokeswoman Liz Rogers said work at Friendship Park is separate and done by another company.

The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear arguments next month on whether the government illegally diverted billions of dollars from the Defense Department to build the wall after Congress denied money that Trump sought, triggering a 35-day government shutdown in 2017.

It is unclear if Biden will adopt Trump's position before the Supreme Court. The government's brief is due Feb. 11.

Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador welcomed Biden's decision to stop wall construction but, in defense of Trump, noted that U.S. presidents going back to 1990s built border barriers. He displayed a chart to prove his point.



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Former Make-A-Wish Iowa CEO charged with embezzling funds

By RYAN J. FOLEY

Associated Press

IOWA CITY, Iowa (AP) —

The former CEO of Make-A-Wish Iowa has been arrested on three felony charges alleging she embezzled tens of thousands of dollars from the charity that supports sick children, the group confirmed Friday.

Jennifer Woodley, 40, was booked at the Polk County Jail in Des Moines on Thursday on two counts of first-degree theft and the unauthorized use of a credit card. She was released on bond.

Months after becoming its leader, Woodley secretly awarded herself a \$10,000 bonus in October 2019 that had not been approved by the board, according to criminal complaints unsealed Friday.

The bonus, which Woodley added to a list of legitimate bonuses earned by other employees, cost the organization \$15,540 in all, police said.

Woodley also made 84 unauthorized purchases on an organization credit card that were for her personal use, totaling more than \$23,000 over a 10-month



This Jan. 21, 2021, photo provided by the Polk County Jail in Des Moines, Iowa shows Jennifer Woodley.

span, the complaints state. Woodley allegedly did not reimburse the group for those expenses.

The organization announced last summer that it had discovered financial irregularities during a compliance review and that Woodley had been dismissed after serving as president and CEO for just

over one year.

Based in the Des Moines suburb of Urbandale, the Iowa group is one of 60 chapters of Make-A-Wish America, which works to provide support and memorable experiences for children with critical illnesses and their families.

Dave Farnsworth, the board chairman for Make-A-Wish

Iowa, said the organization swiftly dismissed Woodley and notified police after discovering the problems last July. He said the organization was "deeply saddened and disappointed by the events" that led to charges against Woodley. "We thank the Urbandale Police Department for its investigation into this breach

of Make-A-Wish's ethical standards and policies, and we will continue to cooperate with law enforcement," he said. "We know that we have an obligation to safeguard every dollar given to us."

No attorney was listed for Woodley in online court records. Each charge she faces is a class C felony that carries up to 10 years in prison.

Make-A-Wish Iowa has an annual budget of \$4 million, a staff of 16 employees and is governed by a 17-member volunteer board.

During Woodley's tenure, the 35-year-old chapter granted its 4,000th wish for a child and said it planned to grant about 170 wishes for children per year.

Jail records list Woodley's new address as Winston Salem, North Carolina, where her husband, Matt Woodley, is an assistant basketball coach at Wake Forest. The couple has had two daughters who have required brain surgery, and one of them received a trip to Walt Disney World through Make-A-Wish Iowa before Woodley was hired as CEO. □

Associated Press

Loathed New York City bus terminal is bound for an upgrade



In this March 19, 2015 file photo, large panels of the ceiling are missing at the Port Authority Bus Terminal in New York.

Associated Press

By DAVID PORTER

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — New York City's main bus terminal, long ridiculed for leaky ceilings, dirty bathrooms and frequent delays, could be in for a major overhaul. The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey un-

veiled a proposal Thursday to rebuild and expand the embattled midtown Manhattan bus terminal.

"Everyone knows the bus terminal. Very few have anything good to say about it," Port Authority Executive Director Rick Cotton said. "It is way past time that this

building be replaced."

The new station would be built on top of the existing one, with sleek, glass-walled entrances and added infrastructure to accommodate more buses. Ramps that stretch across several blocks would be moved, and a storage building would be built to keep empty buses off the streets.

Construction could begin in 2024, finish by 2031 and cost as much as \$10 billion, the Port Authority said. About \$3 billion would come from selling rights to build four commercial buildings in the area, including one atop the terminal. It would also require local and federal funding.

The Port Authority Bus Terminal opened in 1950 at Eighth Avenue between 40th and 42nd streets near Times Square.

A statue of Ralph Kramden, the fictional bus driver from "The Honeymooners," stands outside its main entrance. It also provided an apt backdrop for "Midnight Cowboy," the 1969 film that illuminated New York's seedy underworld.

Prior to the coronavirus pandemic, the terminal handled more than 250,000 passenger trips on weekdays, many commuting from New Jersey. A Port Authority-commissioned study projected that number would increase to more than 330,000 by 2040.

Tom Wright, president of the Regional Plan Association, an urban planning think tank, called the new plan "a creative approach to a complicated problem."

"Fixing the Port Authority Bus Terminal for the 260,000 people who rely on it every weekday is one of the high-

est infrastructure priorities for our region," he said. "The prosperity of our tri-state area will depend on our ability to provide access across the region and connect people to jobs."

Officials have debated replacing or overhauling the bus terminal, the country's busiest, for years. But political squabbling between lawmakers and Port Authority officials from both states left the project stalled while other major infrastructure projects advanced, including a new World Trade Center transit hub and multibillion-dollar makeovers of LaGuardia, JFK and Newark Liberty airports.

The bus terminal wasn't included in the Port Authority's 10-year capital plan in 2014, raising the ire of commuters and New Jersey lawmakers. □

First-ever treaty to ban nuclear weapons enters into force

By **EDITH M. LEDERER**

UNITED NATIONS (AP) —

The first-ever treaty to ban nuclear weapons entered into force on Friday, hailed as a historic step to rid the world of its deadliest weapons but strongly opposed by the world's nuclear-armed nations.

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is now part of international law, culminating a decades-long campaign aimed at preventing a repetition of the U.S. atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the end of World War II. But getting all nations to ratify the treaty requiring them to never own such weapons seems daunting, if not impossible, in the current global climate.

When the treaty was approved by the U.N. General Assembly in July 2017, more than 120 approved it. But none of the nine countries known or believed to possess nuclear weapons — the United States, Russia, Britain, China, France, India, Pakistan, North Korea and Israel — supported it and neither did the 30-nation NATO alliance.

Japan, the world's only country to suffer nuclear attacks, also does not support the treaty, even though the aged survivors of the bombings in 1945 strongly push for it to do so. Japan on its own renounces use



Participants deflate balloons in hope of neutralizing and demolishing nuclear warheads, during a memorial gathering at Peace Park in Nagasaki, southern Japan Friday, Jan. 22, 2021.

Associated Press

and possession of nuclear weapons, but the government has said pursuing a treaty ban is not realistic with nuclear and non-nuclear states so sharply divided over it.

Nonetheless, Beatrice Fihn, executive director of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize-winning coalition whose work helped spearhead the treaty, called it "a really big day for international law, for the United Nations and for survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki."

The treaty received its 50th ratification on Oct. 24, triggering a 90-day period before its entry into force on Jan. 22.

As of Thursday, Fihn told The Associated Press that 61 countries had ratified the treaty, with another ratification possible on Friday, and "from Friday, nuclear weapons will be banned by international law" in all those countries.

The treaty requires that all ratifying countries "never under any circumstances ... develop, test, produce, manufacture, otherwise

acquire, possess or stockpile nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices." It also bans any transfer or use of nuclear weapons or nuclear explosive devices — and the threat to use such weapons — and requires parties to promote the treaty to other countries.

Fihn said the treaty is "really, really significant" because it will now be a key legal instrument, along with the Geneva Conventions on conduct toward civilians and soldiers during war and the conventions banning

chemical and biological weapons and land mines.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said the treaty demonstrated support for multilateral approaches to nuclear disarmament.

"Nuclear weapons pose growing dangers and the world needs urgent action to ensure their elimination and prevent the catastrophic human and environmental consequences any use would cause," he said in a video message. "The elimination of nuclear weapons remains the highest disarmament priority of the United Nations."

But not for the nuclear powers.

As the treaty was approaching the 50 ratifications needed to trigger its entry into force, the Trump administration wrote a letter to countries that signed it saying they made "a strategic error" and urging them to rescind their ratification.

The letter said the treaty "turns back the clock on verification and disarmament" and would endanger the half-century-old Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, considered the cornerstone of nonproliferation efforts.

Fihn countered at the time that a ban could not undermine nonproliferation since it was "the end goal of the Nonproliferation Treaty." □

Talks between Indian farmers, government reach stalemate

By **ASHOK SHARMA**

Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — Talks between leaders of protesting farmers and the Indian government ended abruptly in a stalemate Friday when the agriculture minister said he had nothing more to offer than an 18-month suspension of contentious agricultural reform laws.

Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar asked the farmers to reconsider their rejection of a government offer two days ago to set up a committee to look into their concerns about the laws, which have triggered the biggest farmers' protests in years.

protests in years.

The farmers' organizations announced Thursday that they would not accept anything other than the repeal of the three laws.

No date was set for another round of talks between the government and protest leaders. Tomar told reporters that he is ready to meet again if they decide to accept the government proposal.

Tens of thousands of farmers have been blocking key highways connecting the capital with the country's north for nearly two months and have threatened to intensify their protest by

organizing a massive tractor rally in New Delhi during Republic Day celebrations next Tuesday.

Shiv Kumar Kakkar, a farmer leader, complained that police have been issuing threats to the farmers to call off their protest.

Farmers say the legislation passed by Parliament in September will lead to the cartelization and commercialization of agriculture, make farmers vulnerable to corporate greed and devastate their earnings.

The government insists the laws will benefit farmers and boost production through private investment.



Indian Farmers listen to their leader as they continue to block highway leading to Delhi in protest against new farm laws, at Delhi-Uttar Pradesh border, India, Friday, Jan. 22, 2021.

Associated Press

It has repeatedly ruled out withdrawing the legisla-

tion but says it could make some amendments. □

Russia welcomes U.S. proposal to extend nuclear treaty

MOSCOW (AP) — The Kremlin on Friday welcomed U.S. President Joe Biden's proposal to extend the last remaining nuclear arms control treaty between the two countries, which is set to expire in less than two weeks. Russian President Vladimir Putin's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, said that Russia stands for extending the pact and is waiting to see the details of the U.S. proposal.

The White House said Thursday that Biden has proposed to Russia a five-year extension of the New START treaty.

"We can only welcome political will to extend the document," Peskov said in a conference call with reporters. "But all will depend on the details of the proposal."

The treaty, signed in 2010 by President Barack Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, limits each country to no more than 1,550 deployed nuclear warheads and 700 deployed missiles and bombers, and envisages sweeping on-site inspections to verify compliance. It expires on Feb. 5.

Russia has long proposed to prolong the pact without any conditions or changes, but former President Donald Trump's administration waited until last year to start talks and made the extension contingent on a set of demands. The talks stalled, and months of bar-



Russian President Vladimir Putin attends a meeting on economic issues via video conference at the Novo-Ogaryovo residence outside Moscow, Russia, Thursday, Jan. 21, 2021.

Associated Press

gaining have failed to narrow differences.

"Certain conditions for the extension have been put forward, and some of them have been absolutely unacceptable for us, so let's see first what the U.S. is offering," Peskov said.

Mikhail Ulyanov, the Russian ambassador at the international organizations in Vienna, also hailed Biden's proposal as an "encouraging step."

"The extension will give the two sides more time to consider possible additional measures aimed at strengthening strategic stability and global security," he tweeted.

The Russian Foreign Min-

istry's spokeswoman, Maria Zakharova, noted in a statement that Russia always has called for maintaining the treaty and said Russian diplomats are ready to quickly engage in contacts with the U.S. to formalize its extension for five years "without any delay."

Biden indicated during the campaign that he favored the preservation of the New START treaty, which was negotiated during his tenure as U.S. vice president.

The talks on the treaty's extension also were clouded by tensions between Russia and the United States, which have been fueled by the Ukrainian crisis, Mos-

cow's meddling in the 2016 U.S. presidential election and other irritants.

Despite the extension proposal, White House press secretary Jen Psaki said Biden remains committed to holding Russia "to account for its reckless and adversarial actions," such as its alleged involvement in the Solar Winds hacking event, 2020 election interference, the chemical poisoning of opposition figure Alexei Navalny and the widely reported allegations that Russia may have offered bounties to the Taliban to kill American soldiers in Afghanistan.

Asked to comment on Psaki's statement, Peskov has

reaffirmed Russia's denial of involvement in any such activities.

After both Moscow and Washington withdrew from the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty in 2019, New START is the only remaining nuclear arms control deal between the two countries.

Arms control advocates have strongly called for New START's preservation, warning that its lapse would remove any checks on U.S. and Russian nuclear forces. Last week, Russia also declared that it would follow the U.S. to pull out of the Open Skies Treaty allowing surveillance flights over military facilities to help build trust and transparency between Russia and the West. While Russia always offered to extend New START for five years — a possibility envisaged by the pact — Trump asserted that it put the U.S. at a disadvantage and initially insisted that China be added to the treaty, an idea that Beijing flatly rejected. Trump's administration then proposed to extend New START for just one year and also sought to expand it to include limits on battlefield nuclear weapons.

Moscow has said it remains open for new nuclear arms talks with the U.S. to negotiate future limits on prospective weapons, but emphasized that preserving New START is essential for global stability. □

Islamic State claims deadly and rare twin blasts in Baghdad



In this Thursday, Jan. 21, 2021, file photo, people and security forces gather at the site of a deadly bomb attack in a market selling used clothes, in Baghdad, Iraq.

Associated Press

Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — The Islamic State claimed responsibility for a rare suicide attack that rocked central Baghdad, killing 32 people and wounding dozens. The bombing targeted "apostate Shiites," the group said in a statement on an IS-affiliated website late Thursday.

At least 32 people were killed and over 100 people wounded in the blasts on Thursday. Some were in severe condition. According to officials, the first

suicide bomber cried out loudly that he was ill in the middle of the bustling market, prompting a crowd to gather around him — and that's when he detonated his explosive belt. The second detonated shortly after.

The U.S.-led coalition recently ceased combat activities and is gradually drawing down its troop presence in Iraq, sparking fears of an IS resurgence. The group has rarely been able to penetrate the capital since being dislodged

by Iraqi forces and the U.S.-led coalition in 2017.

The attack was the first in nearly three years to hit the capital. Elsewhere, in northern Iraq and the western desert, attacks continue and almost exclusively target Iraqi security forces.

An increase in attacks was seen last summer as militants took advantage of the government's focus on tackling the coronavirus pandemic and exploited security gaps across disputed territory in northern Iraq. □

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Google threatens to pull search engine in Australia

By NICK PERRY
Associated Press

WELLINGTON, New Zealand

(AP) — Google on Friday threatened to make its search engine unavailable in Australia if the government went ahead with plans to make tech giants pay for news content.

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison quickly hit back, saying "we don't respond to threats."

"Australia makes our rules for things you can do in Australia," Morrison told reporters in Brisbane.

"That's done in our Parliament. It's done by our government. And that's how things work here in Australia."

The confrontation highlights Australia's leading role in the global movement to push back against the outside influence of U.S. tech giants over the news business.

Morrison's comments came after Mel Silva, the managing director of Google Australia and New Zealand, told a Senate inquiry into the bill that the new rules would be unworkable.

"If this version of the code were to become law, it would give us no real choice but to stop making Google search available in Australia," Silva told senators.

"And that would be a bad outcome not only for us, but also for the Australian people, media diversity, and the small businesses who use our products every day."

The mandatory code of conduct proposed by the government aims to make



Mel Silva, left, the managing director of Google Australia and New Zealand, appears via a video link during a Senate inquiry into a mandatory code of conduct proposed by the government at Parliament House in Canberra, Friday, Jan. 22, 2021.

Associated Press

Google and Facebook pay Australian media companies fairly for using news content the tech giants siphon from news sites.

Google has faced pressure from authorities elsewhere to pay for news.

On Thursday, it signed a deal with a group of French publishers paving the way for the company to make digital copyright payments. Under the agreement, Google will negotiate individual licensing deals with newspapers, with payments based on factors such as the amount published daily and monthly internet site traffic.

But Google is resisting the Australian plan because it would have less control over how much it would have to pay. Under the Australian system, if an online platform and a news business can't agree on a

price for news, an arbitration panel would make a binding decision on payment.

Silva said Google was willing to pay a wide and diverse group of news publishers for the value they added, but not under the rules as proposed, which included payments for links and snippets.

She said the code's "biased arbitration model" also posed unmanageable financial and operational risks for Google. She suggested a series of tweaks to the bill.

"We feel there is a workable path forward," Silva said.

Like in many other countries, Google dominates internet searches in Australia. Silva told senators about 95% of searches in the nation are done through Google.

Asked by one senator how

much tax it pays, Silva said last year it paid about 59 million Australian dollars (\$46 million) on revenues of AU\$4.8 billion (\$3.7 billion).

Facebook also opposes the rules and has threatened to remove news stories from its site in Australia. Simon Milner, a Facebook vice president, said the sheer volume of deals it would have to strike would be unworkable.

The Australia Institute, an independent think tank, said lawmakers should stand firm against Google's bullying. □

Feliz dia
di **Betico**

25 JANUARY 2021

Gilberto François "Betico", "Libertador"
and father of the Aruban people.

Your home away from home

playa linda

LOCAL



ORANJESTAD — The island of Aruba has a special day coming up this Monday, January 25th. In a non-pandemic situation the island would have lots of festivities that honor the late pro-autonomy political leader Gilberto Franco (Betico) Croes. He helped the island attain the Status Aparte. Aruba was allowed to func-

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We celebrate our national hero

tion as a commonwealth within the Dutch Kingdom and Betico is honored for this outcome since 1989 by celebrating the Dia di Betico. The official holiday normally features performances, sporting events and games throughout the island. Still we as Arubans celebrate our national hero, in social distance and in our hearts.

Croes himself was not able to enjoy the results of his ongoing struggle; he was involved in an accident on December 31, 1985, and got into a coma. He passed away on November 26, 1986. For the Aruban people, his words will never be forgotten. He told his people: "Si mi cai na caminda, gara e bandera y sigue cu e lucha" which means "If I fall along the way, grab the flag and continue the struggle."



Active man

The father of the Aruban nation, as he is called often, was an active man in Caribbean organizations while he studied in the Netherlands. Betico was a social man, participated in sports and the social and cultural community. He worked as a teacher and instituted the official seal, flag and hymn for the island. During the Round table Conference of 1981, he was responsible for formally setting the date for Aruba's independency. Betico also became leader of the political party Mov-

imiento Electoral di Pueblo (MEP), now the main party that forms the current government that was elected in September 2017. There were two stages in which the Independence was formed: the first one was set for 1986, the second was set for ten years later and enhanced the independence from the Netherlands. However, it never came to a total independence of Aruba in 1996; it was dropped in 1990. The Status Aparte within the Kingdom of the Netherlands was to be a permanent one. □

Aruba closes its borders for Brazil

ORANJESTAD — Due to the new variant of Covid-19 that is discovered in Brazil and is spreading in South America, airlines are cancelling flights to destinations in South America. This in connection with the preventions taken from the new virus variant to spread any further. Dutch airline KLM has informed that they will also cease flying to South America but will continue their flight schedules to the Dutch Caribbean (Aruba, Curacao, St. Maarten, Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba). Stay informed on any news regarding the virus. At the moment Aruba will close its borders with Brazil as from January 25th which is coming Monday. Aruba's border is also closed at the moment for Venezuela and Peru. □



Father and daughter honored on Aruba

EAGLE BEACH — Recently, Kimberley Richardson of the Aruba Tourism Authority had the great pleasure to honor Aruba's loyal and friendly visitors as Goodwill Ambassadors of Aruba.

The Goodwill Visitors certificate is presented on behalf of the Minister of Tourism, as a token of appreciation to the guests who visit Aruba 10 years and more consecutively. The Goodwill Ambassador certificate is presented to guests who visit Aruba 20 years and more consecutively.

The honorees were Father Edward Walko and Daughter Krystyn Walko from the USA and they were honored as Good-



will Ambassadors Visitors of Aruba.

This lovely duo stated that they love the island very much, especially for its year-round sunny weather, nice sandy beaches and picturesque sunsets, delicious variety of foods, its safety, and Aruba's warm and friendly people who became like family

to them.

Richardson together with the representatives of the Caribbean Palm Village presented the certificates to the honorees, handed over some presents and also thanked them for choosing Aruba as their favorite vacation destination and as their home-away-from-home. □

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Creando Conexion

Covid-19 update Aruba

ORANJESTAD — Almost a year after the 1st case of Covid-19 hit the island and was completely shut down for 3.5 months, Aruba's tourism and economy is picking up bit by bit. Borders had been reopened for US Travelers, Europeans, and as per December 1st, 2020 we welcomed back our visitors of Latin America, South America and the rest of the Caribbean with the exception of Venezuela. Rules and protocols are being reviewed and evaluated on a daily basis and adapted as per current situation by a crisis team, in order to protect each and every one visiting and inhabiting our island.

There are currently (January 22nd, closing of this edition) 502 active Covid cases on the island. 478 residents and 24 non-residents. There are 29 persons hospitalized of which 10 of them are in the Intensive care unit. 56 persons lost the battle against Covid-19. Due to the amount of increase in cases these last weeks the Government of Aruba took some additional measurements in order to stop the spread as quickly as possible.

These are the decisions taken by the Government of Aruba up till today: From January 7th 2021 to January 31st 2021 the following will be in effect:

- Curfew starting at 11:00 pm until 5:00 am.
- In addition to the curfew, there are "restricted zones" that are off-limits between the hours of 7pm-5am. Restricted zones include all beaches and public parking lots.
- All establishments are currently required to close by 10:00 pm at the latest.
- This is not applicable for establishments at hotel properties, however

is applicable for hotel Casinos. Closing times per hotel may differ, please check with your hotel for more information.

- Tables at restaurants can have a maximum of four seats indoor and outdoor (excluding children under the age of 12). Tables must be at least 1.5 m apart.
- All bars, rum shops, and nightclubs are closed until further notice. Restaurant bars can serve at tables only. There will be no bar stools and no standing at bars.
- Hotel bars can serve at the bar for only registered hotel guests.

Testing before your return flight

As part of their pandemic travel protocols, some countries/states/cities now require travelers show a negative COVID-19 test result to be granted re-entry to their country of origin. Aruba has all necessary testing facilities and procedures are in place for visitors. For a list of COVID-19 testing facilities in Aruba, check <https://www.aruba.com/us/traveler-health-requirements#measures>.

Important update for USA visitors:

Effective January 26th, 2021, as announced by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), The U.S. government will require all international airline passengers to show proof of a negative Covid-19 test before boarding flights to the United States. In addition, the results of the test must be from no more than 72 hours prior to departure. For the official CDC announcement, check <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2021/s0112-negative-covid-19-air-passengers.html>. □

Aruba to me

ORANJESTAD — You are back and we would like to portrait you! By inviting you to send us your favorite vacation picture while enjoying our Happy Island.

Complete the sentence: Aruba to me is Send your picture with that text (including your name and where you are from) to: news@arubatoday.com and we will publish your vacation memory. Isn't that a special way to keep your best moments alive? Please do note: By submitting photos, text or any other materials, you give permission to The Aruba Today Newspaper, Caribbean Speed Printers and any of its affiliated companies to use said materials, as well as names, likeness, etc. for promotional purposes without compensation.

Last but not least: check out our website, Instagram and Facebook page! Thank you for supporting our free newspaper, we strive to make you a happy reader every day again. For today we received some amazing pictures from **Kimberly Campbell's** vacation on Aruba. She is from Ontario, Canada and she shares with us some special moments:

"Aruba is gratitude for me
I am grateful to be in Aruba
Looking to the heavens in gratitude"

Aruba to me is looking forward
to a better future

Aruba to me is making new
friends on beautiful beaches

Aruba to me is swimming on
beautiful natural pool waters
with friends

Aruba to me is happiness"



Mixed finish on Wall Street as worldwide rally takes a pause

AP Business Writers

THIS IS A BREAKING NEWS UPDATE. AP's earlier story follows below.

Wall Street is tapping the brakes on its record-setting rally this week, as markets worldwide take a pause on Friday.

The S&P 500 was 0.1% lower in afternoon trading, a day after inching up to its second straight all-time high. The Dow Jones Industrial Average was down 119 points, or 0.4%, at 31,057, as of 2:57 p.m. Eastern time, and the Nasdaq composite was up 0.1%.

The modest losses for global markets started early in Asia and then carried westward amid worries about resurgent coronavirus cases in China and weak economic data from Europe. In the United States, disappointing earnings reports from IBM and some other companies gave cover for investors to sell and book profits after big recent gains. The S&P 500 is still on pace to climb 2.1% this week, its third weekly gain in four.

"The big picture is, it's still a pretty friendly environment for stocks," said David Lefkowitz, head of Americas equities at UBS Global Wealth Management. "The pandemic will wind down,



In this photo provided by the New York Stock Exchange, traders work on the floor during the United Wholesale Mortgage IPO, Friday, Jan. 22, 2021.

Associated Press

you'll see a surge in corporate profits this year and the Fed made very clear they're not going to take the punch bowl away anytime soon."

IBM dropped 9.9% for one of the market's sharpest losses after reporting weaker revenue for the last three months of 2020 than analysts expected. The tech giant's revenue has been mostly shrinking for years. IBM nevertheless also reported a higher profit for

the end of 2020 than Wall Street expected. That's been the big theme so far in the early part of this earnings season, with about 13% of companies in the S&P 500 having reported. With bank and some other industries leading the way, profit reports have consistently come in better than Wall Street had feared.

"Earnings have been spectacular," said David Lyon, global investment specialist at J.P. Morgan Private

Bank.

Seagate Technology fell 5.2% despite joining that cavalcade of companies reporting better earnings than expected. It also gave a forecast for revenue and profit in the current quarter that matched or topped Wall Street's. Analysts said a lot of that optimism may have already been built into the stock's price.

Markets have been mostly rallying recently on hopes that COVID-19 vaccines

will lead to a powerful economic recovery later this year as daily life gets closer to normal. Hopes are also high that Washington will deliver another dose of stimulus for the economy now that the White House and both houses of Congress are under single control of the Democrats.

President Joe Biden has proposed a \$1.9 trillion plan to send \$1,400 to most Americans and deliver other stimulus for the economy. But his party holds only the slimmest possible majority in the Senate, raising doubts about how much can be approved. Several Republicans have already voiced opposition to parts of the plan.

The coronavirus pandemic is also worsening and doing more damage to the economy by the day. In Europe, a survey of purchasing managers showed on Friday that activity in the manufacturing and services sectors shrank during January in the 19-country eurozone. The data suggests the eurozone's economy may contract again this quarter.

In European stock markets, France's CAC 40 fell 0.6%, and Germany's DAX lost 0.2%. The FTSE 100 in London dropped 0.3%. □

Existing home sales rise in 2020 to highest in 14 years

By MARTIN CRUTSINGER

WASHINGTON (AP) — Sales of existing homes rose 0.7% in December, pushing the entirety of 2020 to a pace not seen in 14 years and providing one of the few bright spots for a U.S. economy mired in a global pandemic.

Rising sales in the final month of the year lifted activity to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 6.76 million units in December, the National Association of Realtors reported Friday.

For all of 2020, sales rose to 6.48 million, the highest level since 2006 at the height of the housing boom. That represented a 5.6% gain from the 5.34 million previously owned homes sold in 2019.

The median sales prices was \$309,800 in December, up 12.9% from a year ago. The big jump in prices reflected strong demand as Americans locked down by the pandemic and forced to work from home are seeking to move to larger homes. Sales have been boosted by record-low mortgage rates.

Economists predicted those trends would continue this year, though mortgage rates may rise slightly from record lows if the economy improves as expected as vaccines become more widely available.

"Expect economic conditions to improve with additional stimulus forthcoming and vaccine distribution already underway," said

Lawrence Yun chief economist for the Realtors.

"As Covid-19 levels drop due to vaccinations and warmer weather, expect more Americans to put their houses on the market," Robert Frick, corporate economist at Navy Federal Credit Union, predicted.

The inventory of unsold homes fell to an all-time low of a 1.9-months supply, down from 2.3 months in November and 3 months a year ago. Homes typically remained on the market for 21 days in December, down from 41 days that a home would be on the market before selling in December 2019.

Economists said that home builders have boosted construction in response



A "sale pending" sign is posted on a home in Westfield, Ind., Friday, Sept. 25, 2020. Sales of new homes remained steady in October at a seasonally adjusted rate of 999,000 units.

Associated Press

to the strong demand but still face supply constraints such as a lack of available building lots.

For December, sales of

single-family homes rose 0.7% to a rate of 6.03 million while sales of condominiums were up 1.4% to 730,000. □

Judge says Amazon won't have to restore Parler web service

By MATT O'BRIEN
AP Technology Writer

Amazon won't be forced to immediately restore web service to Parler after a federal judge ruled Thursday against a plea to reinstate the fast-growing social media app, which is favored by followers of former President Donald Trump.

U.S. District Judge Barbara Rothstein in Seattle said she wasn't dismissing Parler's "substantive underlying claims" against Amazon, but said it had fallen short in demonstrating the need for an injunction forcing it back online.

Amazon kicked Parler off its web-hosting service on Jan. 11. In court filings, it said the suspension was a "last resort" to block Parler from harboring violent plans to disrupt the presidential transition.

The Seattle tech giant said Parler had shown an "unwillingness and inability" to remove a slew of dangerous posts that called for the rape, torture and assassination of politicians, tech executives and many others. The social media app, a



An Amazon logo appears on an Amazon delivery van, Thursday, Oct. 1, 2020, in Boston.

Associated Press

magnet for the far right, sued to get back online, arguing that Amazon Web Services had breached its contract and abused its market power. It said Trump was likely on the brink of joining the platform, following a wave of his followers who flocked to the app after Twitter and Facebook expelled Trump after the Jan. 6 assault on the U.S. Capitol.

Rothstein said she rejected "any suggestion that the public interest favors requiring AWS to host the incendiary speech that the record

shows some of Parler's users have engaged in." She also faulted Parler for providing "only faint and factually inaccurate speculation" about Amazon and Twitter colluding with one another to shut Parler down.

Parler said Thursday it was disappointed by the ruling but remains confident it will "ultimately prevail in the main case," which it says will have "broad implications for our pluralistic society."

Amazon said it welcomed the ruling and emphasized that "this was not a case

about free speech," a point also underscored by the judge.

Parler CEO John Matze had asserted in a court filing that Parler's abrupt shutdown was motivated at least partly by "a desire to deny President Trump a platform on any large social-media service." Matze said Trump had contemplated joining the network as early as October under a pseudonym. The Trump administration last week declined to comment on whether he had planned to join.

Amazon denied its move to pull the plug on Parler had anything to do with political animus. It claimed that Parler had breached its business agreement "by hosting content advocating violence and failing to timely take that content down."

Parler was formed in May 2018, according to Nevada business records, with what co-founder Rebekah Mercer, a prominent Trump backer and conservative donor, later described as the goal of creating "a neutral platform for free

speech" away from "the tyranny and hubris of our tech overlords."

Amazon said the company signed up for its cloud computing services about a month later, thereby agreeing to its rules against dangerous content.

Matze told the court that Parler has "no tolerance for inciting violence or law-breaking" and has relied on volunteer "jurors" to flag problem posts and vote on whether they should be removed. More recently, he said the company informed Amazon it would soon begin using artificial intelligence to automatically pre-screen posts for inappropriate content, as bigger social media companies do.

Amazon last week revealed a trove of incendiary and violent posts that it had reported to Parler over the past several weeks. They included explicit calls to harm high-profile political and business leaders and broader groups of people, such as schoolteachers and Black Lives Matter activists. □

Google's parent deflates internet-beaming balloon company



In this Feb. 14, 2018, file photo the logo for Alphabet appears on a screen at the Nasdaq MarketSite in New York. Google's parent company, Alphabet Inc., is letting the air out of an internet-beaming balloon company that was providing online access from the stratosphere.

Associated Press

By MICHAEL LIEDTKE
AP Technology Writer

SAN RAMON, Calif. (AP) — Google's parent company is letting the air out of an internet-beaming balloon company that was providing online access from the stratosphere.

The plan to shut down Loon

was announced late Thursday, ending what started out nine years ago as one of Google's secret projects in its so-called "moonshot factory," a division now called X. Google, Loon and X all are owned by Alphabet Inc., which draws upon Google's digital advertising

empire finance risky ideas like internet-beaming balloons and another high-profile flop, internet-connected glasses.

As reflected by its name, Loon was viewed as a crazy idea from the start. Yet Google's hopes for the project were as lofty as the high-flying balloons themselves when the company finally took the wraps off the project in New Zealand in June 2013.

The ambitious goal at that time was to launch thousands of massive balloons 12 miles (20 kilometers) into the stratosphere in order to bridge the gaping digital divide between the world's 4.8 billion unwired people and their 2.2 billion plugged-in counterparts.

Since then, more countries that had little or no internet access now have gotten more ways to get online partly because of the explosive growth of smart-

phones during the past decade.

That made it even more challenging for Loon to find a way to make money, culminating in the decision to deflate it.

"The road to commercial viability has proven much longer and riskier than hoped," Astro Teller, the head of the X division, wrote in a blog post.

Alphabet doesn't disclose the results of other companies besides Google. The group of other far-flung companies that include self-driving car pioneer Waymo, health services venture Verily and drone delivery gambit Wing are clumped together with Loon and others in a division known called "Other Bets." Those operations have suffered a combined \$12 billion in operating losses since 2016 while Google has produced a combined operating profit of \$140 bil-

lion during the same period.

Loon's balloons had been working with telecom providers to provide internet access in Kenya and will continue to do that until March, according to Teller. Because it has been working with other companies on that access, Loon expects little or no disruption to the Kenyan customers' internet access.

To help Kenya expand its internet access, Alphabet is will give \$10 million to nonprofits and businesses aimed at advancing that cause.

Most of the employees working at Loon will be laid off with severance packages while some others will be offered jobs at X, Google or Alphabet, Teller said. He didn't disclose how many of Alphabet's 132,000 employees, — most of whom work within Google — are at Loon. □

FDA approves 1st long-acting HIV drug combo, monthly shots

By **MARILYNN MARCHIONE**
AP Chief Medical Writer

U.S. regulators have approved the first long-acting drug combo for HIV, monthly shots that can replace the daily pills now used to control infection with the AIDS virus. Thursday's approval of the two-shot combo called Cabenuva is expected to make it easier for people to stay on track with their HIV medicines and to do so with more privacy. It's a huge change from not long ago, when patients had to take multiple pills several times a day, carefully timed around meals. "That will enhance quality of life" to need treatment just once a month, said Dr. Ste-

ven Deeks, an HIV specialist at the University of California, San Francisco, who has no ties to the drug's makers. "People don't want those daily reminders that they're HIV infected." Cabenuva combines rilpivirine, sold as Edurant by Johnson & Johnson's Janssen unit, and a new drug — cabotegravir, from ViiV Healthcare. They're packaged together and given as separate shots once a month. Dosing every two months also is being tested. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved Cabenuva for use in adults who have had their disease well controlled by conventional HIV medicines and who have not shown signs

of viral resistance to the two drugs in Cabenuva. The agency also approved a pill version of cabotegravir to be taken with rilpivirine for a month before switching to the shots to be sure the drugs are well tolerated. ViiV said the shot combo would cost \$5,940 for an initial, higher dose and \$3,960 per month afterward. The company said that is "within the range" of what one-a-day pill combos cost now. How much a patient pays depends on insurance, income and other things. Deeks said long-acting shots also give hope of reaching groups that have a hard time sticking to treatment, including people



These illustrations, provided by drugmaker ViiV Healthcare on Thursday, Dec. 10, 2020, shows a rendering of the packaging and vials containing its new HIV treatment, Cabenuva, approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration on Thursday, Jan. 21, 2021.

Associated Press

with mental illness or substance abuse problems. □

Classifieds

For Sale: Casa del Mar

Presidential unit at Casa Del Mar for week 1, room 1317. 2 bedroom, 2 bath, full kitchen, dining room, pool and fitness center. Asking \$16,000. Call USA, 845-239-2918 or email garyhudak684@comcast.net

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Presidential unit at Casa Del Mar for week 2, room 1511. 2 bedroom, 2 bath, full kitchen, dining room, pool and fitness center. Asking \$16,000. Call USA, 845-239-2918 or email garyhudak684@comcast.net.

For Sale: Barcelo

All Inclusive. Prime week, studio deluxe unit. Sleeps 2. Cost of food and liquor package extra. Cost of ownership \$12,000. Call USA 845-239-2918 or email garyhudak684@comcast.net.

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week 10/1207 (15k);
weeks 11-15 also available!
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U.S. (860)992-3890

Conceptis Sudoku

By Dave Green

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4		5	6			7		
	2			3			6	
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8		1				4		5
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Difficulty Level ★★★★★

1/23

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'Human Factor' gets personal about Mideast peace

By **JOCELYN NOVECK**
AP National Writer

Ready for a documentary about three decades of agonizing fits and starts of the Mideast peace process, from the perspective of U.S. negotiators? You're probably thinking that doesn't sound too enticing right about now.

But there's a reason "The Human Factor," by Israeli filmmaker Dror Moreh, escapes what would seem a likely fate of being interesting only to policy wonks and those with a direct stake in the issue, and it has something to do with the title. It's a reference to a line from Dennis Ross, the best-known negotiator of the bunch.

"You can't ignore the human factor," he says at the beginning. "Someone who has a human touch treats someone else with respect. Someone who has a human touch doesn't think they're going to outsmart anybody."

The film goes on to prove the point, threading a delicate line between giving us necessary facts and sounding like a dry history lesson. But the value is in the small, and yes, human details -- like the fact that Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat took it upon himself to cut Ross' chicken for him when they ate together. Or the incongruous sight of Arafat's



President Bill Clinton, center, looks on as Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, left, and PLO leader Yasser Arafat shake hands in the East Room of the White House after signing the Mideast accord in Washington on Sept. 28, 1995.

Associated Press

entourage watching "The Golden Girls" on TV. The film is full of such humanizing touches, not just about Arafat but about Israeli leaders and American ones, too. Like Bill Clinton, depicted here as a man on a career-defining mission to achieve a peace deal. One small but stunning anecdote: As the Monica Lewinsky scandal is breaking, casting a cloud over

Clinton's presidency, Ross looks over at his boss' notepad during a crucial meeting. Clinton is writing: "Focus on your job. Focus on your job." The film traces the long slog of peace efforts through archival footage and interviews with key negotiators: Ross, who played a huge role for more than a decade, working for presidents from Reagan

to Obama; Martin Indyk, twice the U.S. ambassador to Israel; and negotiators Gamal Helal, Aaron David Miller and Daniel Kurtzer. Through these men, especially Ross, we get a close-up view of world leaders and how they behaved behind closed doors. There's a fascinating description of a meal in the small dining room off the Oval Office between Clinton, Arafat,

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and King Hussein of Jordan. Ross describes an offended Hussein admonishing Netanyahu as if he were a wayward schoolboy: "You don't have the maturity to be a leader," he tells him, according to Ross. "You have to grow up and become a leader." There's silence in the room. At another point, Ross describes Clinton exclaiming about Netanyahu: "Who does he think the superpower is?"

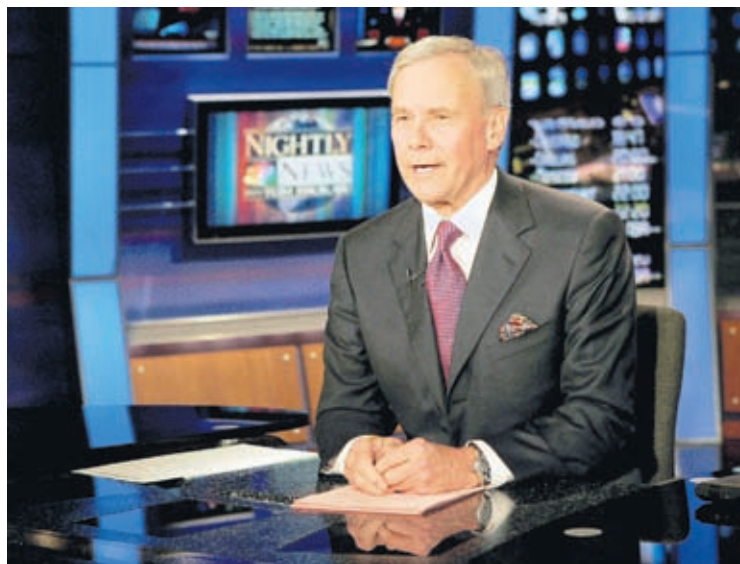
This is, of course, after the death of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin at the hands of a Jewish extremist in 1995, as he pursued peace. The film effectively portrays the grudging respect that had slowly formed between Rabin and Arafat, from a moment when shaking hands was a painful gesture to a time when Arafat would casually drape his arm across Rabin's back.

For this viewer, the most "human" factor of the film comes with the shock over Rabin's death, especially from Ross himself. The negotiator recounts that he'd been taking one of his children home from a doctor's visit when he was paged by Secretary of State Warren Christopher.

Once the news sunk, Ross' wife had to explain to their children why Dad was crying. □

Tom Brokaw says he's retiring from NBC News after 55 years

NEW YORK (AP) — NBC News veteran Tom Brokaw



"NBC Nightly News" anchor Tom Brokaw delivers his closing remarks during his final broadcast, in New York on Dec. 1, 2004.

Associated Press

said Friday that he is retiring from the network after 55 years. Brokaw, author of "The Greatest Generation," was NBC's lead anchor at "Nightly News" and for big events for more than 20 years before giving way to Brian Williams in 2004. The 80-year-old newsman did documentaries and made other appearances for the networks after that, but he has fought cancer and his television appearances have been more sporadic. He said he will continue to be active in print journalism, writing books and articles.

Brokaw began at NBC in its Los Angeles bureau in the 1960s, where he covered Ronald Reagan's first run for public office and the assassination of Robert F. Kennedy. He was a White House correspondent during Richard Nixon's presidency, and began co-hosting the "Today" show in 1976. He started hosting "Nightly News" in 1983. For two decades, the triumvirate of Brokaw, ABC's Peter Jennings and CBS' Dan Rather were the nation's most visible broadcasters, anchoring major stories like the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks.

"During one of the most complex and consequential eras in American history, a new generation of NBC News journalists, producers and technicians is providing America with timely, insightful and critically important information, 24/7," Brokaw said. "I could not be more proud of them." □

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7	8	4	2	6	9	1	5	3
2	5	9	1	8	3	6	4	7

Difficulty Level ★★ ★★ ★ 1/23

NFC Matchups: Where else to start but Brady and Rodgers?

By **BARRY WILNER**
AP Pro Football Writer

More than 100 players will suit up for Sunday's NFC championship game, so try to ignore all those talking heads making mention of only two: Tom Brady and Aaron Rodgers.

Yes, it's as juicy a matchup of quarterbacks as the current NFL can offer. The Battle of the Bays might well be decided by what Mr. Six Rings does against the Packers' defense, or what the 2020 All-Pro Rodgers manages versus the Buccaneers' D.

The only time Green Bay (14-3) was overwhelmed this season was a 38-10 loss in October to the Bucs (13-5).

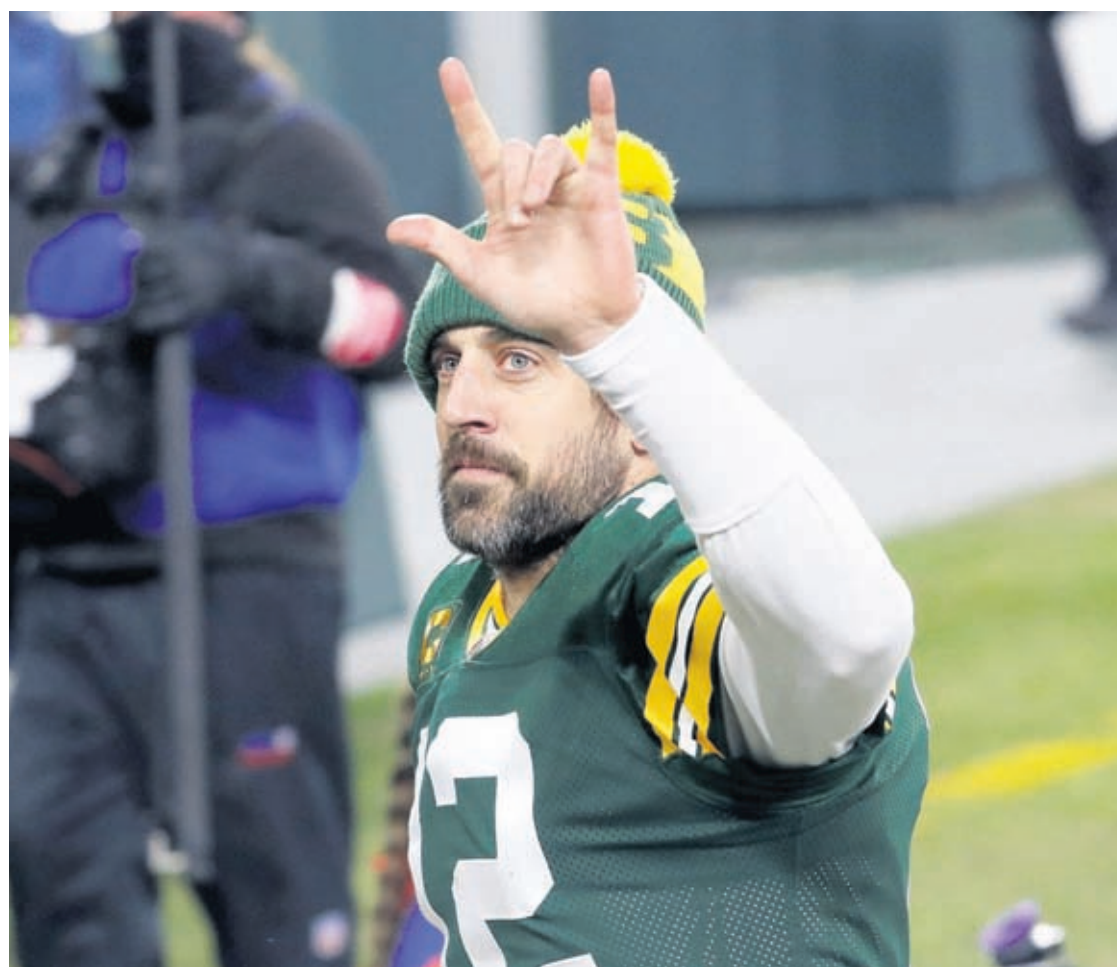
That said, here's what each team will be looking at in Lambeau Field.

WHEN THE BUCS HAVE THE BALL:

We'll get to Brady in a moment, because a decent amount of Tampa Bay's chances will depend on running backs Leonard Fournette and Ronald Jones being productive. They have been, particularly Fournette, in recent games.

If the offense is balanced, Brady is at his most dangerous. He might occasionally test cornerbacks Jaire Alexander, Kevin King and Chandon Sullivan with deep throws, but more likely will rely on stud wideout Mike Evans, the re-emerging Antonio Brown, and Chris Godwin and Scotty Miller on shorter plays that allow them to gain yards after catch. Coach Bruce Arians ruled out the re-emerging Antonio Brown because of a knee injury, but a missed tackle on the others by any Green Bay defender easily could lead to six points.

While the Bucs have the more established tight ends in Rob Gronkowski and Cameron Brate, they might not have the most impactful at the position (see below). But Gronk in particular has always been a big-play guy in big games for Brady, and Green Bay doesn't have linebackers who excel in coverage. Look for



Green Bay Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers waves to spectators after an NFL divisional playoff football game against the Los Angeles Rams Saturday, Jan. 16, 2021, in Green Bay, Wis.

Associated Press

safeties Adrian Amos and Darnell Savage to handle the big guy as best they can.

For Brady to get a shot at a seventh Super Bowl title, his protection, anchored by left guard Ali Marpet and rookie right tackle Tristan Wirfs, must stand up against Za'Darius Smith and Preston Smith, both potential game changers for the Packers. Green Bay will do some blitzing, though not as much as Buccaneers defensive coordinator Todd Bowles figures to do.

Don't expect the Bucs (nor the Packers) to commit many turnovers, either.

WHEN THE PACKERS HAVE THE BALL:

Green Bay doesn't have the multi-pronged attack Tampa Bay does, but it has the top receiver in this game in All-Pro Davante Adams. It's pretty simple when it comes to somewhat neutralizing Rodgers, who is having perhaps the best season of his Hall of Fame-caliber career: slow down Adams. Few opponents have done so no matter who or how many DBs cover Adams.

The burden will fall much of

the time on an underrated group of cornerbacks featuring Carlton Davis, Jamel Dean and Sean Murphy-Bunting. Indeed, both teams have impressive secondaries, with rookie Antoine Winfield Jr., and Jordan Whitehead performing well at safety for Bowles.

Unlike Brady, Rodgers can create outside the pocket, and he's especially dangerous when doing so. His star running back, Aaron Jones, not only is terrific in the ground game, but he's a top-level receiver. Few teams run screens to wideouts as well as the Pack — except the Buccaneers, who rank second in that category to Green Bay's fifth.

Drops can be an issue for Adams' comrades, but Rodgers seems to have confidence in all of them — Allen Lazard, Marquez Valdes-Scantling and TE Robert Tonyan, who might be the most improved player in the NFL for 2020. Tonyan seems to get more open than any other tight end in the league.

His matchup with Tampa Bay's superb linebackers, Devin White and Lavonte

David, could be decisive.

The Packers' All-Pro center, Corey Linsley, probably will need to help out against sack threats Jason Pierre-Paul and Shaq Barrett. LG Elgton Jenkins had a strong season. Green Bay's other standout blocker, All-Pro LT David Bakhtiari, is injured.

SPECIAL TEAMS:

Not much to laud on either side. Not very special, no. Veteran placekicker Mason Crosby is solid, making all 16 field goal attempts, but missed four PATs for Green Bay. He knows how to kick in rough conditions, of course.

Packers punter JK Scott also can deal with the winds and weather at Lambeau, but he's a bit inconsistent. Green Bay struggles in punt coverage and rarely threatens to break a return, but the Bucs are susceptible to them, especially on kickoffs.

Tampa Bay's Ryan Succop, now in his 12th pro season, made 28 of 31 field goal tries but missed five extra points. No, we don't get it, either.

Punter Bradley Pinion has a big leg.

COACHING:

A real contrast here.

Arians has been around as long as the NFL itself; well, not quite, but this is his 46th year in coaching. He began in college in 1975 and in the pros in 2001, and his open-minded approach on offense always has matched changes in the game. Arians is a two-time AP Coach of the Year, winning as the interim with Indianapolis in 2012 when Chuck Pagano was battling leukemia, and in 2014 with Arizona.

It took a while, but he has melded the play calls with Brady's preferences, and he has allowed Bowles to oversee a big-play defense.

Matt LaFleur, also an offensive mastermind but more in the workings of the recent schemes, has meshed beautifully with Rodgers and what his quarterback prefers called. LaFleur, 41, put more emphasis on the running game to relieve Rodgers of carrying the entire load.

Mike Pettine, like Bowles a former head coach, has put together an aggressive squad led by the Smith Brothers and Alexander.

INTANGIBLES:

While this is old hat for Brady — in a football sense, isn't everything to Brady? — his new franchise has been to one Super Bowl, winning it in February 2003. There's a hunger in Tampa, and there's always a hunger in Brady.

Plus, no franchise has ever played in a Super Bowl on its home field.

Among Cheeseheads, there's a belief that Rodgers and the Pack should have been in more than one NFL title game. This is the best overall team he has been on, including the 2010 champions.

And the memory of being blown out so badly in last year's NFC championship by San Francisco remains fresh. As does the 38-10 loss to Tampa Bay three months ago.

"What's happened in the past at this point, it really doesn't matter," LaFleur said. "It's about what we do moving forward." □

Hank Aaron, baseball's one-time home run king, dies at 86

ATLANTA (AP) — Hank Aaron, who endured racist threats with stoic dignity during his pursuit of Babe Ruth's home run record and gracefully left his mark as one of baseball's greatest all-around players, died Friday. He was 86.

The Atlanta Braves, Aaron's longtime team, said he died peacefully in his sleep. No cause was given.

Aaron made his last public appearance just 2 1/2 weeks ago, when he received the COVID-19 vaccine. He said he wanted to help spread the to Black Americans that the vaccine was safe.

"Hammerin' Hank" set a wide array of career hitting records during a 23-year career spent mostly with the Milwaukee and Atlanta Braves, including RBIs, extra-base hits and total bases.

But the Hall of Famer will be remembered for one swing above all others, the one that made him baseball's home-run king.

It was a title he would be hold for more than 33 years, a period in which the Hammer slowly but surely claimed his rightful place as one of America's most iconic sporting figures, a true national treasure worthy of mention in the same breath with Ruth or Ali or Jordan.

Before a sellout crowd at Atlanta Stadium and a national television audience, Aaron broke Ruth's home run record with No. 715 off Al Downing of the Los Angeles Dodgers.

The Hall of Famer finished his career with 755, a total surpassed by Barry Bonds in 2007 — though many continued to call the Hammer the true home run king because of allegations that Bonds used performance-enhancing drugs.

Bonds finished his tarnished career with 762, though Aaron never begrudged someone eclipsing his mark.

His common refrain: More than three decades as the king was long enough. It was time for someone else to hold the record.

No one could take away



In this April 8, 1974, file photo, Atlanta Braves' Hank Aaron holds aloft the ball he hit for his 715th career home in Atlanta.

Associated Press

his legacy.

"I just tried to play the game the way it was supposed to be played," Aaron said, summing it up better than anyone.

He wasn't on hand when Bonds hit No. 756, but he did tape a congratulatory message that was shown on the video board in San Francisco shortly after the new record-holder went deep. While saddened by claims of rampant steroid use in baseball in the late 1990s and early 2000s, Aaron never challenged those marks set by players who may have taken pharmaceutical short cuts. Besides, he always had that April night in 1974.

"Downing was more of a finesse pitcher," Aaron remembered shortly before the 30th anniversary of the landmark homer. "I guess he was trying to throw me a screwball or something. Whatever it was, I got enough of it."

Aaron's journey to that memorable homer was hardly pleasant. He was the target of extensive

hate mail as he closed in on Ruth's cherished record of 714, much of it sparked by the fact Ruth was white and Aaron was black.

"If I was white, all America would be proud of me," Aaron said almost a year before he passed Ruth. "But I am black."

Aaron was shadowed constantly by bodyguards and forced to distance himself from teammates. He kept all those hateful letters, a bitter reminder of the abuse he endured and never forgot.

"It's very offensive," he once said. "They call me 'nigger' and every other bad word you can come up with. You can't ignore them. They are here. But this is just the way things are for black people in America. It's something you battle all of your life."

After retiring in 1976, Aaron became a revered, almost mythical figure, even though he never pursued the spotlight. He was thrilled when the U.S. elected its first African-American president, Barack Obama, in 2008. Former President Bill

Clinton credited Aaron with helping carve a path of racial tolerance that made Obama's victory possible.

"We're a different country now," Clinton said at a 75th birthday celebration for Aaron. "You've given us far more than we'll ever give you."

Aaron spent 21 of his 23 seasons with the Braves, first in Milwaukee, then in Atlanta after the franchise moved to the Deep South in 1966. He finished his career back in Milwaukee, traded to the Brewers after the 1974 season when he refused to take a front-office job that would have required a big pay cut.

While knocking the ball over the fence became his signature accomplishment, the Hammer was hardly a one-dimensional star. In fact, he never hit more than 47 homers in a season (though he did have eight years with at least 40 dingers).

But it can be argued that no one was so good, for so long, at so many facets of the national pastime.

The long ball was only part of his arsenal.

Aaron was a true five-tool star.

He posted 14 seasons with a .300 average — the last of them at age 39 — and claimed two National League batting titles. He finished with a career average of .305.

Aaron also was a gifted outfielder with a powerful arm, something often overlooked because of a smooth, effortless stride that his critics — with undoubtedly racist overtones — mistook for nonchalance. He was a three-time Gold Glove winner.

Then there was his work on the base paths. Aaron posted seven seasons with more than 20 stolen bases, including a career-best of 31 in 1963 when became only the third member of the 30-30 club — players who have totaled at least 30 homers and 30 steals in a season.

To that point, the feat had only been accomplished by Ken Williams (1922) and Willie Mays (1956 and '57).

Six-foot tall and listed at 180 pounds during the prime of his career, Aaron was hardly an imposing player physically. But he was blessed with powerful wrists that made him one of the game's most feared hitters. Hall of Famer Mike Schmidt described Aaron as "an unassuming, easygoing man, a quiet superstar, that a '70s player like me emulated."

"He was one of my heroes as a kid, and will always be an icon of the baby boomer generation," Schmidt said. "In fact, if you weigh all the elements involved and compare the game fairly, his career will never be topped."

Aaron hit 733 homers with the Braves, the last in his final plate appearance with the team, a liner down the left field line off Cincinnati's Rawley Eastwick on Oct. 2, 1974. Exactly one month later, he was dealt to the Brewers for outfielder Dave May and minor league pitcher Roger Alexander.

The Braves made it clear they no longer wanted Aaron, then 40, returning for another season on the field. They offered him a front office job for \$50,000 a year, about \$150,000 less than his playing salary.

"Titles?" he said at the time. "Can you spend titles at the grocery store? Executive vice president, assistant to the executive vice president, what does it mean if it doesn't pay good money? I might become a janitor for big money."

Aaron became a designated hitter with the Brewers, but hardly closed his career with a flourish. He managed just 22 homers over his last two seasons, going out with a .229 average in 1976.

Even so, his career numbers largely stood the test of time.

Aaron still has more RBIs (2,297), extra-base hits (1,477) and total bases (6,856) than anyone in baseball history. He ranks second in at-bats (12,354), third in games played (3,298) and hits (3,771), fourth in runs scored (tied with Ruth at 2,174) and 13th in doubles (624). □